

the challenges facing our country. Band-Aid efforts will not work and will ultimately make our problems worse. We must reform our entitlement programs, we must simplify the Tax Code, and we have to reduce spending and get our budget back in balance.

We cannot tax, borrow, and spend our way to prosperity as a Nation; but working together, I believe we can and must arrive at balanced solutions that involve ideas from both parties. Our Nation is better than the partisanship that has blocked needed reform to fix these problems.

Mr. Speaker, now is our moment. Together, let's renew the spirit and promise of our great Nation.

SOCIAL SECURITY IS AN EARNED BENEFIT

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. A group of millionaire and billionaire CEOs that call themselves the Campaign to Fix the Debt is visiting the White House today. According to Lloyd Blankfein, the CEO of Goldman Sachs, Social Security must be reduced.

It didn't contribute anything to the debt or deficit, but that's his solution. What did he say? He said:

You're going to have to do something undoubtedly to lower people's expectations of what they're going to get.

He went on to say:

Social Security wasn't devised to be a system that supported you for a 30-year retirement after a 25-year career.

Well, his arrogance is only exceeded by his ignorance. That's not the way Social Security works, Mr. Blankfein. It's an earned benefit. I know you wouldn't know about that because you've got \$11.9 million in your retirement fund, and you're not too worried about the future of Social Security. The average benefit is \$14,000 a year, and most people work 45 years to get that. And you say they need to lower their expectations?

Well, I've got a solution for you: pay Social Security tax on all your income, and you too will get a benefit. And you might need it because we're not bailing out Wall Street again.

THE FISCAL CLIFF

(Mr. YARMUTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, my Republican colleagues have talked a lot about the importance of finding common ground in negotiations over tax rates and the fiscal cliff.

The truth is we do have a lot of common ground. We all believe we should extend the tax cuts for 98 percent of Americans and 97 percent of small businesses. We should be building on that common ground, not arguing over semantics. I'm confident there are more

Republicans like Congressman TOM COLE, who has come to the realization that we can and we must provide economic security for middle class families and financial certainty for small business owners immediately.

As my Democratic colleagues and I have been saying, that's easy, we should pass the Senate bill to extend current tax rates for middle class families and small businesses. We could do it today.

Too often in Washington we confuse principles with policies. And certainly the difference between asking the wealthy to pay their fair share by raising their income tax rate and by eliminating their deductions can't be a matter of principle. That's policy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues and Republican leadership to build on our common ground and bring the Senate bill to the floor for a vote.

HONORING SERGEANT FIRST CLASS MICAH WELINTUKONIS AND THE SIXTH GRADE CLASS OF MABELLE B. AVERY MIDDLE SCHOOL

(Mr. COURTNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, every year the sixth grade class at the Avery Middle School in Somers, Connecticut, participates in the Three Points on Purpose program to emphasize the importance of giving back to the community.

This fall, the sixth grade class chose to raise funds and awareness for Sergeant Micah Welintukonis, an 18-year Army veteran who was critically injured in Afghanistan on July 9 of this year while trying to rescue fellow soldiers. Micah is now back home. He's had six separate surgeries. He's making great strides; but he and his wife, Camilla, who is now pregnant with their third child, have suffered some economic loss which these kids have stepped forward to help with. They've done a walkathon, they've done collection jars, and they've done bake sales. Next week, they will present a check for over \$4,000 to Sergeant Welintukonis and his family.

Again, Sergeant Welintukonis' recovery is continuing, and he's making remarkable progress. He has put his life on the line to save his fellow soldiers. He's a true hero. And I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Sergeant Micah Welintukonis' service to our Nation and to the Avery Middle School sixth grade class who chose to dedicate their time and service to helping him and his family.

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THE FISCAL CLIFF

(Ms. HANABUSA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, what will it take to address the people's con-

cerns? The people are concerned about the fiscal cliff. We have to begin to put the people first and set partisan politics aside. What does this mean? People will pay.

The Tax Policy Center estimates that, if we do nothing, the average American will see his tax bill rise by \$3,446 in 2013. Unemployment will increase from 7.9 percent to 9.1 in 2013. We will also begin to lose the 30 months of steady private sector job growth. Sequestration will mean FEMA will lose \$878 million. Tell that to the people who are suffering from Hurricane Sandy. \$23 billion will be lost in rental assistance to the poor, and the nutritional programs will lose \$543 million.

Mr. Speaker, is this our message to the people of this great Nation? I hope not. It shouldn't be. Let's begin to work together. We have got to address the people's concerns.

WORLD AIDS DAY

(Mr. CICILLINE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, this Saturday is World AIDS Day, which is an opportunity for us to recognize the significant progress that we have made over the last three decades in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Yet, while we have made significant strides during this time, we also have to recognize that substantial work remains to be done. Although the number of new infections is steadily decreasing every year, 34 million people, including 1 million people in the United States and more than 2,000 in my home State of Rhode Island, live with HIV or AIDS today.

In the weeks ahead, as we discuss how we are going to reduce the size of our Federal deficit, it is critical that we move forward in a way that allows our country to continue to play a leadership role in the global fight against this disease. As a member of the Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus, I applaud the progress that we have made as a Nation since the scientific community first identified this disease, and I urge my colleagues to continue to support advances in its treatment and prevention until we can live in a world without HIV and AIDS.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ALBANIAN INDEPENDENCE

(Mr. ENGEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ENGEL. Today is November 28, 2012, and it is exactly 100 years to the day of Albanian independence—when the people of Albania threw off the shackles of the Ottoman Empire. Now let's look at Albania today—it's a thriving democracy and it's a member of NATO.

Let's look at the fact that during the fifties and the sixties—for 50 years—